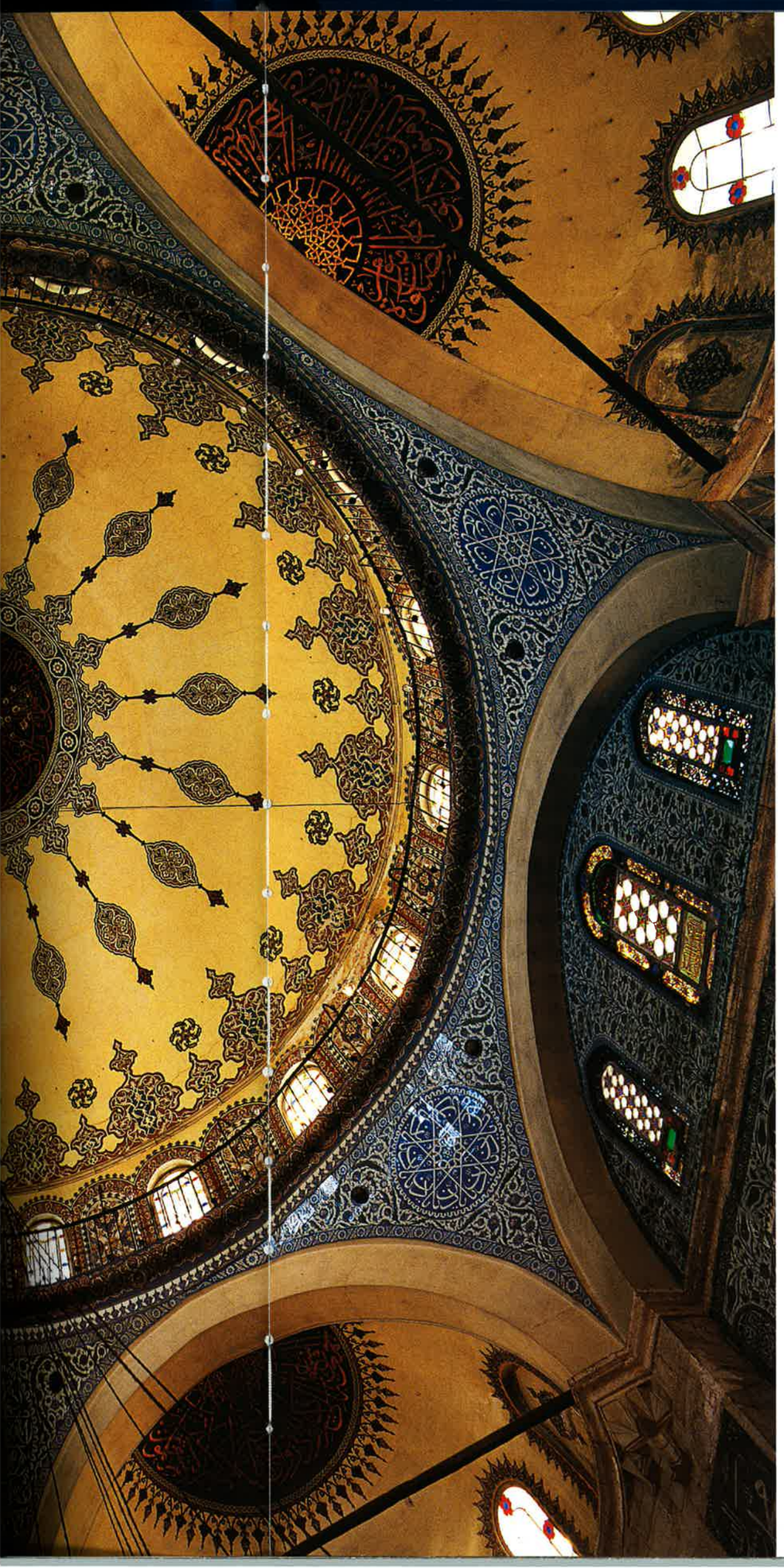


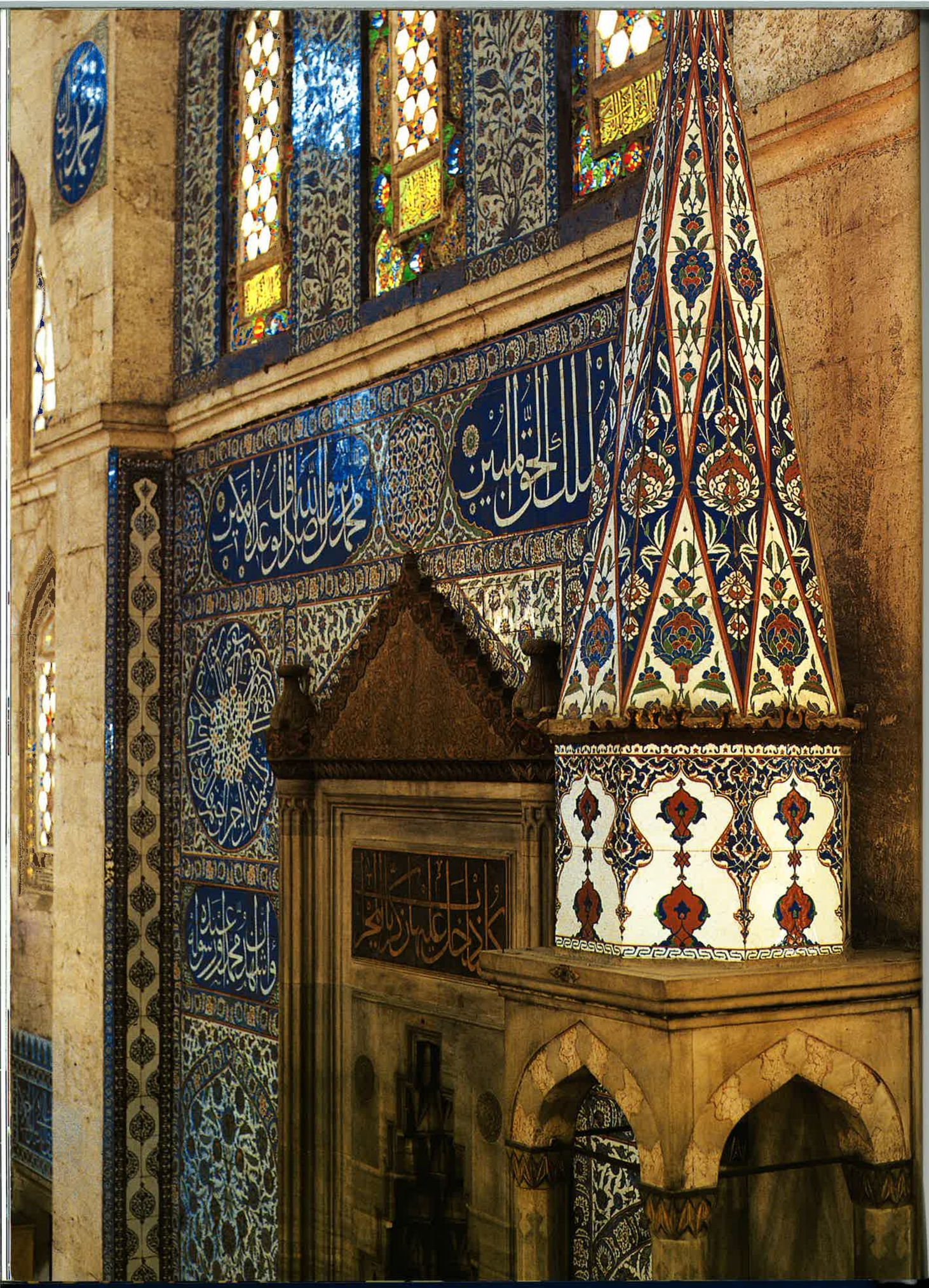
are vivid, the designs innovative and full of energy, and the ceramic craftsmanship is impeccable.

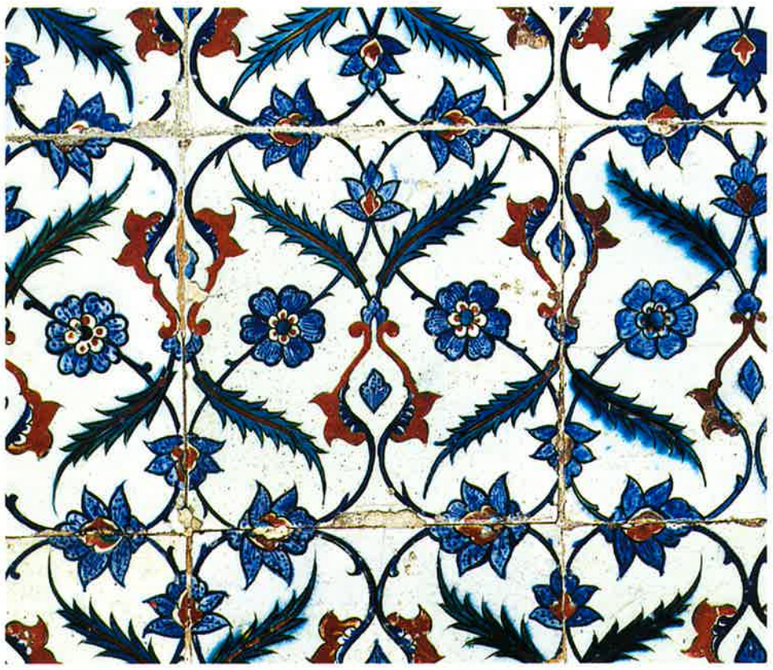
Above these panels, symbolizing the arched gateway into Paradise, the rest of the ceramic decoration rises in careful iconographical order, all executed continuously over the large field of standard square tiles. Blue-ground white *thuluth* inscriptions in cartouches and roundels form the next zone around the top of the mihrab, interspersed with brilliant arabesques of flowers and split-leaf vegetal forms. The panel ends at a strong horizontal cornice molding of white marble set into the limestone wall. Above the molding the ceramic decoration continues up to the arch of the dome, but in a completely different style. If there was no intrusion of the popular Ottoman garden flowers into the hatayi purity of the tile decorations in the lower qiblah wall, above the molding the garden flowers reign supreme. Tulips, carnations, rosebuds, hyacinths, honeysuckles, and rosettes, all gracing the same undulating, ascending vines, form the decoration of both upper zones, the lower rectangular in shape, the upper, above another marble molding, a tympanum under the arch of the dome. The literal Ottoman view of Paradise as a heavenly garden full of familiar flowers cultivated in the earthly Ottoman garden here receives its most beautiful statement.

Above the qiblah wall the dome hovers on six identical tiled pendentives (shown opposite). All the square-headed interior windows on ground and gallery levels have decorative panels of Iznik tiles above them, a few with floral arabesques and most with inscriptions. Elsewhere in the mosque are tile panels giving the names of God, the Prophet, and the first six imams or leaders of the early Islamic community recognized by all Sunni Muslims as the "rightly guided Caliphs." As in the Selimiye mosque in Edirne, Sinan has included a conical spire covered with Iznik tiles on the top of the minbar pulpit itself (see overleaf). Today almost unnoticed in the mosque, set in gilded brass bezels above the mihrab, the minbar, and above the main entrance on the rear wall, are four small pieces of the Black Stone from the Kaaba in Mecca.

In the completion of the decorative tiles for the Selimiye and the Sokullu mosques, the Iznik tradition

Mosque of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, Istanbul, ca. *1572. Dome and pendentives.*





Opposite:
Mosque of Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, Istanbul, ca. *1572.*
Qiblah wall and minbar.

Left:
Topkapı Palace, Istanbul, ca. *1590.*
*Façade of the former Audience Hall (*Has oda*), now the Chamber of the Sacred Relics of Islam (*Hirka i saadet dairesi*).*
Detail of wall revetments.

reached its classical moment, a balance of technical and artistic perfection. The "noble simplicity and quiet grandeur"—to use Winckelmann's immortal phrase—of the Ottoman classical style now having been attained, the artists and ceramists of Istanbul and Iznik now began to look toward new ways of bringing a sense of excitement and innovation to their artistic creativity.

Late 16th-Century Extravagance and Decline under Murad III

According to gossip of the time, Selim II died in 1574 of complications suffered from a fall in his *hammam* or Turkish bath; rumors spoke darkly of overindulgence in wine as a cause of the fatal tumble. In fact, Selim had been ailing for some time, and there is evidence that work on the Selimiye in Edirne was speeded up in an attempt to finish the building before the patron died. If Selim did indeed suffer his fatal accident in his new baths in the Topkapı Palace, some of the most beautiful products of Iznik were witness to the event, for the baths contained three panels of tiles in a new and rather spectacularly flashy style, which survive in the Topkapı Palace, although they have since been removed from their original location. Each of the three panels contains two cartouches at the top that bear a distich of Ottoman court poetry in the *nastaliq* style of script normally used for the Persianate secular writing at the Ottoman court. Its quick, cursive forms and horizontal emphases contrast markedly with the august *thuluth* script preferred for religious inscriptions. The arched panels—two with a white ground, one with a blue ground—are brilliant expressions of the court style in the mid-1570s. The blue-ground panel depicts a symmetrical fruit tree covered with buds and blossoms, flanked by extravagant bouquets of tulips and carnations. The border is quite unusual—double-pointed red-and-white rumi forms strongly reminiscent of the form known in French flamboyant Gothic as a *mouchette* undulate along a turquoise-ground border, itself integral with the entire panel of 45 tiles, 5 wide by 9 tall. A second panel has the same border, but white-ground cartouches and an arched field, in which a delicate hatayi arabesque of saz leaves and palmettes surrounds a blue-ground central medallion decorated with tulips, carnations, rosebuds, hyacinths, and honeysuckles. The two decorative styles—of Shah Kulu and Kara Memi—are used together side by side in the composition, but implicit rules of propriety still in place in 1572 have kept them from actually mixing together. A third panel, also on a white ground, breaks the taboo and mixes two large red carnations into the hatayi field. If the tiles of the Selimiye and the Sokullu were the exemplars of a high classicism in Ottoman art, these secular works point the way toward a much freer and more ebullient style that was deemed more appropriate for a secular setting in which pleasure and luxury were the bywords.

Selim was succeeded by Murad III, whose quarter-century rule lasted until 1599. In the area of miniature